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ABSTRACT

The school librarian and the school reading teacher can and should be working together to provide an atmosphere conducive to the effective use of the school library. To do this, the librarian should learn something about the way children are taught to read and about the problems of the poor reader by consulting the reading teacher for advice on books to read on the teaching of reading. Reading teachers should participate in the selection of books and materials, using selection aids provided by the school librarian. The librarians should provide a place for all kinds of reading and create and maintain a climate in which enjoyment of reading can flourish, with a separate room for group activities and with all facilities accessible to all students at all times. The librarian should also participate in the reading development of the students who use the school library by selecting, interpreting, and advising students on the use of materials. Finally, the librarian and the teacher should collaborate to make reading a truly "in" thing in the school. (Author/KKC)

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HOW THE LIBRARIAN CAN ASSIST THE READING TEACHER

by

Dr. Alpha Myers

When I was invited to speak to you, I accepted at once, saying "This is a subject in which I am greatly interested." I immediately began asking librarians about their work with reading programs and reading teachers in their schools. I did not get the response I had expected. What do librarians think about reading? They're in favor of it! What do they know about the process of learning to read? With a few exceptions, they know very little about it.

In surveying the library literature on the subject, I found very little about work with reading teachers. In 1970 the Wilson Library Bulletin did have a special issue called "The Librarian and the Teaching of Reading."[1] Arthur Plotnik, the guest editor of this issue, began:

> See the librarian. See the reading teacher. See the reader. See the librarian run. One way. See the reading teacher run. The other. See the reader. He is confused.

It would be natural to assume that librarians promote reading. They always include statements to that effect in lists of their professional goals. They glibly quote from "The School Library Bill of Rights" adopted by the American Association of School Librarians, and from "The Student's Right to Read," a statement made by the National Council of Teachers of English. The well stocked school libraries throughout all the fifty states attest to the librarians devotion to books and reading. As a former school librarian I know that we believe in the importance of reading, and we enjoy reading guidance. But I must admit that we get so preoccupied with the many duties relative to the efficient running of our libraries that we may not follow through on reading guidance unless the teachers demand it.

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Perhaps I should not have been surprised that my replies from the librarians included such remarks as: "Reading teachers? Oh, they don't need the library. They have their own materials in the Reading Laboratory." Or "She's not interested. She never comes to the library." One librarian said, "Oh, you mean the teachers that work with all those machines? No, I've never been down there. I don't have time!" And all the while we forget that if people suddenly stopped learning to read, in time there would be no need for books, or for libraries, or for librarians.

Thus, it would seem that the first thing librarians should do is to learn something about the way children are taught to read, and about the problems of the poor reader. We can begin with the special issue of "Wilson Library Bulletin". It contains articles on reading by experts (e.g., Nila B. Smith and Allen Berger), a glossary of reading terms, and lists of sources of reading materials.

Looking over the most recent books on the teaching of reading, I found such a plethora of titles that I would recommend that the librarian consult the reading teacher or supervisor for advice on books to read on the teaching of reading.

It is important that the librarian learn to recognize and to accept the child with reading problems, and to perceive the role of the librarian in the total reading life of the child. Just what is that role?

First, let's start with the obvious - the traditional role of providing materials for reading. We all know that the student is best served by an abundance of books and materials, and that these should be broad in subject coverage and in a wide range of reading levels. We also feel that the "easy" books should not be segregated or marked so that the slower readers will be embarassed to read them. We know that the collection should provide for the

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needs and interests of special groups such as the disadvantaged, the gifted and the handicapped readers. We strive to supply sufficient duplication of titles to serve the total school population.

The teachers, especially the reading teachers, should participate in the selection of these books and materials. When librarians complain that they cannot get cooperation in selection, I suggest that they share their selection aids with the teachers. For example, the American Library Association publishes excellent lists and reviews. A magazine called "Booklist" may be routed to the teachers to check for recommended purchases. Compilations of these reviews[2] are issued periodically, and may be consulted for large orders. These have the added advantage of indexes for quick reference. The annotations for the books listed are short but critical and authoritative.

Another library publisher brings out "Blueprints for Better Reading",[3] which emphasizes reading guidance and is quite useful to reading teachers and librarians. There are many such aids to be shared.

The reading teacher may also share with the librarian a knowledge of measures of readability. I have used the Fry chart with some success in selecting books for slower readers, and in library science classes in selection. This chart was published in "School Libraries"[4] with an explanation by the author, and a companion article by Mary Gaver describing its use in assigning reading difficulty levels in a comprehensive selection series which she edits for Bro-Dart. The school librarian should know and use readability scales for more accurate estimates of the reading difficulty of books purchased for the school library.

In addition to the central library collections, there should also be materials and books in classrooms, preferably revolving collections jointly selected by the teacher and librarian. One librarian had casters put on some of the

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low book cases so that the books could be moved to and from the library and classroom with ease and speed.

Another important aspect of the provision of materials is the professional library. Here again, the cooperation of the reading teacher in selecting the best from the many books in the field is essential. You may not be aware that most library schools require a liberal arts degree for admission to graduate programs in library science. The few education courses usually required for certification of school librarians may not have included anything on reading instruction. Since the limited budgets in school libraries make wise selection desirable, it is up to the reading teacher to guide the librarian in the selection of professional books in the field of reading.

The second way the librarian can assist the reading teacher is to provide a place for reading. All kinds of reading. The librarian can create and maintain a climate in the library in which enjoyment of reading can flourish. There should be quiet areas where a child can concentrate without being disturbed. There should be other areas where children can read and talk about the books they have read. The library should be warm and welcoming, with a minimum of regulations and prohibitions. I remember visiting a school library where a boy was standing outside looking in at a sign which spelled out the things not allowed in the library, as he said "No talking, no textbooks ... no kids!" and he walked away. Of course, disturbances and disruptive behavior are not part of a good reading atmosphere. A friendly librarian who is known for consistent concern and helpfulness to the students can usually get cooperation from them on reasonable rules and restrictions.

There should be separate rooms for group activities. Story hours, book talks, dramatizations of favorite stories - all are time-tested avenues of book promotion. With proper space creative students, teachers, and librarians

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can make the library a book promotion center.

Important to the most effective use of these library facilities is full accessibility to all students at all times. The librarian should actively seek to provide time for individual voluntary free reading, as opposed to the fully scheduled day in the elementary school library of the past. When each class in the school is regularly scheduled once a week for a library "visit," this can mean that the child is limited to this one trip to the library per week. A library should not be a place to visit - it should be the child's reading home whenever he needs or wants to be there.

A similar situation sometimes exists in a secondary school library if every period of the day is taken up with study halls scheduled in the library. Of course, a reading room full of busy students looks fine, but if they are not there by choice and are not using library materials, they are depriving other students who might have occupied those chairs because they wanted or needed books and materials found only in the school library. I once discussed this with some administrators who advocated the practice of scheduling study halls in the library, saying that it would get students into the library and promote reading. I said that I knew of no recorded instance where anyone gained a love of books through osmosis, and that working your algebra problems beside a shelf of good books would not necessarily inspire you to read the books. I further suggested that they just paint some books on the walls of a room and schedule the study hall there - no need to waste money on books if the people who want to read them do not have full access to them.

Third, the librarian can actively participate in the reading development of the children and young people who use the school library. Innovative teaching and learning practices in education make the participation of the librarian mandatory. For example, independent study programs in the subject fields and

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individual reading programs require many and varied materials. The librarian selects, interprets, and advises students on the use of materials. This key role in the educational process must be accepted by the school librarian.

The librarian includes reading study skills in the library training programs conducted in the library and the classroom. The most successful library skills programs are those integrated with class work, and taught by the teacher and librarian as a team. Practice in skimming and scanning is part of the training in locating articles in magazines and reference books. These should be recognized as reading skills. In subject classes when working with their teachers on reading projects and writing term papers, the students can learn survey techniques as they check the indexes and tables of contents of books for their study and writing projects.

The SQ3R Study Formula (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, and Review) may be practiced effectively with library books. With such a variety and amount of books and materials at hand, the student can also learn critical evaluation of sources by comparisons when applying the study formula.

Fourth, the librarian and teacher can collaborate to make reading truly the "in" thing to do in secondary schools. Book centered activities such as discussion groups and book talks can be held in the library. They should be accorded the same fanfare which is given other school activities. One school had a lively discussion group called IDEA, which was planned and led by the students, with a minimum of supervision by the librarian. At another school, the speech class members gave readings from plays in the library during the lunch hours. One librarian had a series of exhibits featuring quotations from books, and gave paperback books as prizes to students who guessed the sources first The possibilties are endless.

Demonstrating enjoyment of reading can be a big factor in giving prestige

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to book reading. Enthusiasm is always infectious. One librarian takes snapshots of students and teachers and interviews them about the good books they have read lately. She posts the photos and comments of the readers, and generates much interest in reading. Very effective! While this might not be love of reading by osmosis, it certainly is communicable.

So you can see that the delineation of the ways that the librarian can help the reading teacher turns out to all about the ways that they can help each other. If we could have some sensitivity sessions in which the reading teacher and librarian could exchange roles, any misunderstandings we may have about our separate roles could be eliminated. We could then emerge from our respective stereotypes into an atmosphere of mutual trust and concern for children and reading. We could fully share our unique skills and knowledge and pursue our closely related goals more effectively.

Let us close with a wishful paraphase of Mr. Plotnik's opening "reader":

> See the librarian. See the reading teacher. See the reader. See the librarian run. One way. See the reading teacher run. The same way. See the reader. Confident and happy.

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